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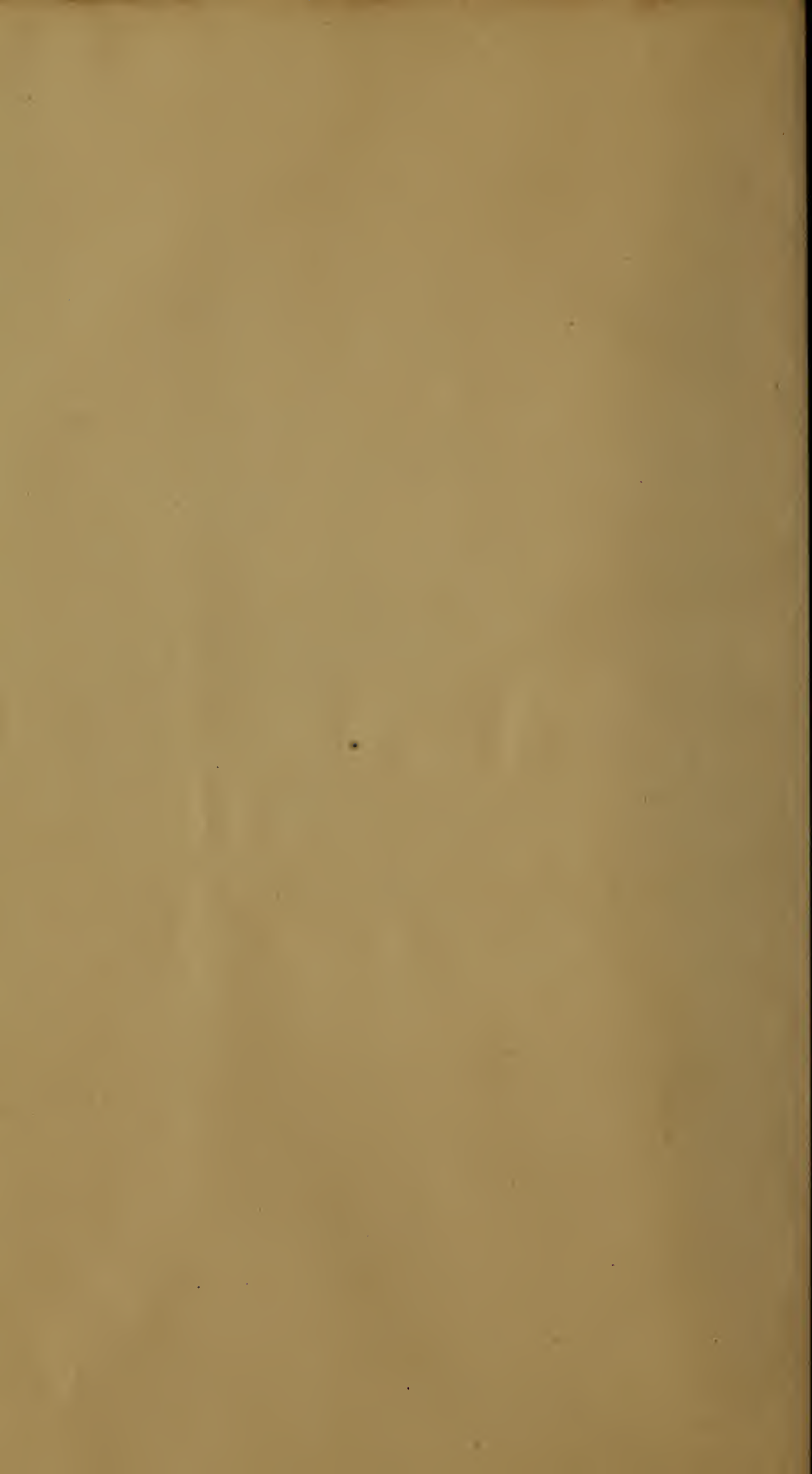
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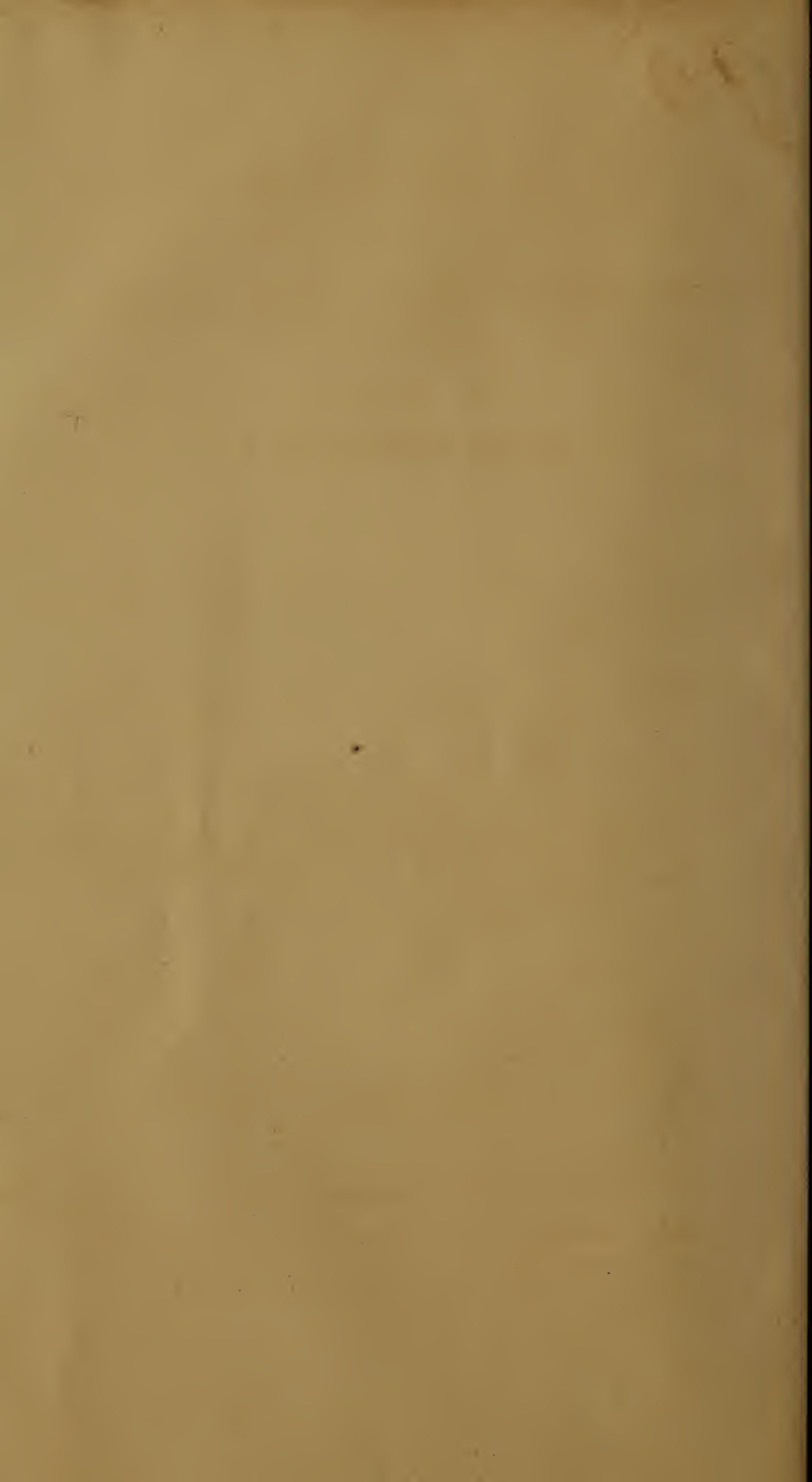
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LETTER

ON

THE PREJUDICES OF THE GREAT IN SCIENCE
AND PHILOSOPHY

AGAINST

PHRENOLOGY;

ADDRESSED TO

THE EDITOR

OF

THE EDINBURGH WEEKLY JOURNAL.

“ All the arguments that can be used will be as little able to prevail as the
“ wind did with the traveller to part with his cloak, which he held only the
“ faster.”—LOCKE.

BY GEORGE COMBE.

EDINBURGH :

JOHN ANDERSON, JUN., 55, NORTH BRIDGE STREET;
AND SIMPKIN & MARSHALL, LONDON.

1829.

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LETTER

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE EDINBURGH WEEKLY JOURNAL.

SIR,

You may be surprised why I should have selected your notice of Phrenology as the subject of a reply, and in such a tone as is taken in this Letter. There are three reasons,—First, In a short answer to Mr Stone's elaborate production, I had ventured to describe you as having relinquished your hostility to Phrenology, at a time when, as it oddly happened, you were about to resume it. Secondly, Your criticism affords a good opportunity of addressing some observations to the public, for whom this Letter is principally intended. Thirdly, I have much respect for your character, and you are generally understood to represent, on many subjects, the sentiments of the “greatest” literary character of the age. The common attacks of vanity and petulance sink into oblivion as rapidly as they are given forth; but when you speak gravely and at length on a solemn topic, you, from your known candour, are listened to with merited attention. This Letter, therefore, is a tribute of sincere esteem; and while I scruple not to “utter my thoughts” with the freedom of one who knows that he is addressing an enlightened and candid mind, I trust that no expression will follow which even malice itself shall be able to construe into personal hostility or disrespect; nor am I without hope of making a favourable impression even upon yourself.

The errors which it appears to me you have committed

shall be frankly exposed ; but it is proper to state at the very threshold, that I attach no demerit to you for treating Phrenology with habitual neglect. You have your own pursuits, which occupy your time, as you naturally conceive, to far greater advantage ; and, besides, I am not so extravagant as to expect that all the world should study Phrenology any more than that they should become profound mathematicians, chemists, or anatomists. I blame no person for avoiding this inquiry, or treating it lightly. Individuals have an undoubted right to please their own tastes in their studies ; and while they confine themselves to simple neglect, they do not suffer any diminution even in my esteem. There is a positive pleasure, and great practical advantage, in being acquainted with Phrenology, the want of which is the natural, and therefore a sufficient, penalty incurred by those who refuse to listen to its pretensions. But you pronounce judgment on what the Phrenologists have done, as if you knew all that they had accomplished. Placed in a situation of authority, and invested with some influence over public opinion, you first announce what is most true, that “ you have never studied the subject very deeply ;” and then, forgetting this statement, you, in a few sentences afterwards, denounce the evidence as insufficient, as if you were acquainted with its nature and extent. This affords just matter of complaint ; because you give rise to erroneous impressions, and, so far as your authority goes, foster prejudice and avert inquiry.

That you have not studied very deeply is farther proved by your falling into the snare which Mr Stone has laid for all Anti-Phrenologists. You have been captivated by his “ Observations,” which, nevertheless, are so palpably ridiculous, that no man who understands the first elements of Phrenology, who has seriously examined twenty casts or skulls in his life, or who has used his eyes in comparing Mr Stone’s statements with nature, could have been deceived by them. Of all this I shall very shortly satisfy yourself. It is easy for Mr Stone to mistify the public mind with measurements,

and decimals, and assertions without foundation ; but the eye and the hand will, in five minutes, refute a volume of such lucubrations. Now, I affirm without fear of contradiction, and I am ready to demonstrate to your own senses, whenever you shall intimate a desire to be informed, that there is a great and palpable difference between the heads of executed criminals and those of virtuous men, and between the heads of Burke and Hare in particular and those of men of opposite dispositions ; and that these differences extend not to inappreciable and evanescent quantities, but to palpable bulk in given directions, which cannot puzzle any inquirer who is willing to perceive length, breadth, and thickness. All this evidence was patent in the Phrenological Hall to you and every one else whom Mr Stone addressed ; and it was impossible to compare his statements with nature without perceiving their fallacy. But you did not consider it necessary to take this trouble. You were quite ready to believe self-evident absurdities *against* Phrenology ; for example, that Hare's three organs of Destructiveness, Benevolence, and Conscientiousness, were larger than his whole head. This nonsense, from the language of praise which you have employed, you have credited on Mr Stone's bare assertion ; while you have not deigned to employ your own senses, lest they should convince you that Phrenology is true.

Even at this early stage I must remark farther, that you have contented yourself with adducing, in a vague and feeble manner, but yet as triumphant, objections which, in the phrenological works, have not only been stated more forcibly than by yourself, but also been examined and answered. You and others, it is possible, may think the answers not sufficient ; but, until you had fully considered and obviated them, you were not at liberty to assume an air of victory, and re-state the objections as if they had been entirely new. This is a topic which will be recurred to.

No multitude of facts, and no force of evidence, can possibly operate on those who pursue such a course,—who shut their eyes and close their understandings against conviction ;

and this is what the “great in science and philosophy” and their followers have done in all ages, and are now doing. The great men of Harvey’s day died before the circulation of the blood was admitted to be true ; and so must the great men of this generation expire before the functions of the brain shall be recognized as ascertained.

On the subject of the evidence of Phrenology it is interesting to remark, that regarding one fact your means of information were complete. You sent your own son to a Phrenologist, who examined his head, and gave you a written sketch of his natural talents and dispositions. Now, how did this experiment tell in regard to the truth of the doctrines ? You are known to possess a fair and candid mind,—so much of Conscientiousness, in short, that you are incapable knowingly of withholding justice even from a Phrenologist ; and, accordingly, the imperative calls of truth have, in this instance, fairly overcome the inveterate prejudices which, on other points of this controversy, have obscured your naturally equitable judgment. You say,—“A gentleman, who was
 “no believer in Phrenology, but had yet been startled from time to
 “time with well-authenticated instances appearing to substan-
 “tiate its pretensions, sent his son, a boy betwixt eleven and
 “twelve, to a Phrenologist of skill, in order that his cranium
 “might be examined, and its developments compared with his
 “actual disposition and character. The father was of opinion,
 “that this would go far to decide the value of Phrenology, at
 “least to his own conviction, the boy’s character being of a sin-
 “gularly mixed nature, the most distinct or rather opposite
 “qualities appearing to thrive in it with equal strength and
 “luxuriancy, while they were in no respect indicated by his
 “countenance, which, though rather handsome, was any thing
 “but strongly marked. It was the common-place ruddy coun-
 “tenance of a pretty boy, which was calculated to throw no
 “light whatever upon either the talents or the moral qualities
 “of the subject ; and it should be premised, that the phrenolo-
 “gical artist was altogether ignorant of these. The result was
 “as follows :—A paper was returned to the father, shortly after
 “the examination, of a nature not extremely flattering, nor alto-
 “gether discouraging. Shortly afterwards the boy was invited
 “to reside for some time in a family, the heads of which are dis-
 “tinguished for their intellectual attainments ; and by whom the
 “most pointed attention was paid to the investigation of his

“ character, and the cultivation of his mind. A report was periodically made to the father of his son’s progress in all respects ; and in a short time it was distinctly ascertained, that every quality, bad and good, as well as most of his tastes, predilections, and partialities—some of which were *bizarre* enough—had been exhibited exactly, in manner and degree, as they had been described and anticipated by the Phrenologist. We are aware that there is little in this account to distinguish it from many others that are stated to occur in phrenological investigations. But, from the general tenor of this article, it will be seen that we are no converts to Phrenology ; and therefore the above statement has a title to be received with implicit confidence in its truth, however it may be accounted for, or whatever weight may be given to it.”

With this fact falling within the scope of your own experience, you, nevertheless, observe,—“ We are inclined to look with some suspicion on the very rapid growth and sudden maturity of Phrenology. Every other science has had a long infancy and very slow growth. A mushroom springs up in a night, and dies in a day or two ; the growth of an oak is hardly perceptible in a course of years, and it stands, in strength and vigour, for ages. Such seems to be the difference between the growth and duration of spurious and real science. With these views of the present state of Phrenology, (whatever its future state may be,) it appears to us to be the height of infatuation to take it as a guide in the most important concerns of human life. If it is not positively an *ignis fatuus*—a will-o’-the-wisp—(which there is some reason to apprehend is its true character), it is at all events a glimmering, feeble, and uncertain light,—a mere darkness visible. And yet we see affectionate fathers and fond mothers sporting with the destinies of their children, by *educating* them according to a set of principles, which, for any thing yet *proved* to the contrary, may be as fantastic as those of alchymy or animal magnetism.”

The observation, that “ every other science has had a long infancy, and very slow growth,” is absolutely contradicted by the history of philosophical discovery. The doctrine of the circulation of the blood was as completely demonstrated by Harvey as it is at the present day. It was matured by himself. In like manner, Newton’s theory of planetary motion was almost complete as it emanated from his own mind. No principle which he announced as established has ever been overturned, and the additions which have since been made to his discoveries are extremely unimportant. La Place and some

other astronomers have explained phenomena which he left in the condition of anomalies ; but they have done so by bringing them fairly within the scope of his philosophy, and not by correcting errors which he had committed. Sciences of observation, such as chemistry, natural history, and geology, in which the *objects* are numerous and complicated, grow slowly by successive additions from generation after generation ; but all sciences depending on a single great principle have advanced to maturity with rapidity, whenever that principle has been fairly discovered. Now, Phrenology belongs to this class. The grand principles are, that the brain is a congeries of organs manifesting a plurality of faculties, and that the size of an organ, other conditions being equal, is an index to the power of the faculty. This assertion may be proved or refuted in a week by an active and acute observer. When in Dublin, I visited the asylum for incurable pauper lunatics, and on pointing out nearly twenty idiots, whose brains were extremely deficient in size, but in whom no trace of diseased structure appeared, the individuals who accompanied me acknowledged that it was not necessary to go farther to discover the effects of size in the brain on the mental manifestations. The brain, therefore, is neither so large, the organs so complicated, nor are opportunities for observation so few, as to render it either impossible or difficult for a man of a powerful and active mind, *who has discovered the true method of studying its functions*, (for a great deal depends on this,) to establish in thirty years the grand outline of its physiology. Phrenologists do not pretend that their science is perfect ; but you insinuate that it has not even a foundation, and thereby deprive Dr Gall of the honour that is unquestionably his, and represent the subject as an illusion.

The same consideration affords another answer to your severe remarks against “ affectionate fathers and fond mothers sporting with the destinies of their children, by *educating* them according to phrenological principles.” What should we think now of a critic who should condemn Har-

vey's first convert for having treated his patients on principles founded on the reality of the circulation of the blood? A natural truth is a truth at all times, whether recognized by men's intellects, obscured by their ignorance, or opposed and denied by their prejudices. The blood circulated in the arteries of the very men who employed the vigour resulting from that circulation in denying its existence; and the brain is performing its functions in yourself and the other individuals who most zealously decry them. From the moment when a natural truth is discovered it becomes available; and it is a weak mind which perceives that nature gives forth the fountain, and which yet fears to embark on the stream. It would not be wise in you, who have "never studied the subject very deeply," to set about educating your children on your own crude and mistaken impressions of what Phrenology really is; but it is equally preposterous in you to stigmatize as visionaries the "affectionate fathers and fond mothers" *who have studied* Phrenology deeply, recognized its truth, and experienced its practical utility in education, for applying it in that manner, merely because it has not yet received the superscription of the great. On the subject of education, the "great in science and philosophy" may shade their brows, and stand mute before the world. The day is not far distant when the meagerness of their achievements in this department of usefulness will be duly estimated; meantime the fact is certain, that there are fathers and mothers, whose attainments and good sense will bear an advantageous comparison with those of the opponents of Phrenology, who for years have educated their children by the lights of this science, and who already have experienced a great reward in its beneficial effects.

And, after all, what do you conceive a phrenological education to mean? In the very instance you quote, you show that a Phrenologist has given a most particular and accurate analysis of the mental character of your son. Now, is this of no utility in education? Suppose the Phrenologists who em-

ploy their lights in education to be equally successful in discovering the characters of their own children, ought they to disregard this knowledge, because it has been obtained through the medium of Phrenology? The Phrenologist, having discovered the talents and dispositions of his children, endeavours to curb the passions that are too powerful, to foster the principles that are too weak, to direct each faculty to its proper objects, and, above all, to inculcate practically the doctrine that intelligence and virtue, love to God, shown in obedience to his laws, and charity to man, are the noblest attributes of humanity. This is phrenological education, and it is this which you blame parents for carrying into practice.

You have favoured your readers with your impressions of Phrenology, founded avowedly on very imperfect information. Permit me to cite, as a contrast, the testimony of a newspaper, whose editor, *previously to inquiry*, showed hostility equal, if not superior, to your own. After the conclusion of my late lectures in Dublin, the following notice appeared, in the usual editorial form, in the Dublin Evening Mail of 4th May, 1829:—

“ Mr Combe has just finished his course of lectures in this city.
 “ Speculations of this nature are, it may be said, quite new to the
 “ Irish public. The subject, until lately, was hardly ever men-
 “ tioned even in private society; and whenever the unhappy
 “ Phrenologist was bold enough to advance opinions which he at
 “ least felt convinced were based upon experiment and reason, the
 “ best reception he had to expect was the quiet smile of contempt
 “ or incredulity. No sympathizing friend was to be found for
 “ whose supporting voice the unfortunate disciple of Gall might
 “ look, and Phrenology was unhesitatingly classed with animal
 “ magnetism, alchymy, and astrology. It required no incon-
 “ siderable share of firmness in the person who should venture
 “ publicly to advocate a doctrine so despised, who, in the face
 “ of an intelligent and educated audience, should attempt to sup-
 “ port, by adequate examples and arguments, not only that Phre-
 “ nology was not false, but that it was amongst the most import-
 “ ant truths that have ever been discovered by the human intel-
 “ lect. This task Mr Combe had the courage to undertake, and
 “ his endeavours have been crowned with the most complete
 “ success. The lectures from the first were attended by a most
 “ respectable class, both as to number and intelligence. As the
 “ subject became more developed, and the talents of the lecturer

“ better known, the public interest increased in a rapid proportion. Many, who had never before thought on the subject, were induced to attend from motives either of instruction or amusement, and few could leave the lecture-room without carrying away some impressions of the importance of the science, so numerous and varied were the facts and arguments which Mr Combe’s well-stored mind enabled him each day to bring to bear upon the subject under discussion.

“ All through this extensive and arduous course, the illustrations were most happily chosen, the facts clearly and simply laid down, and the reasonings founded upon them acute and convincing. We thought Mr Combe peculiarly happy in his method of treating the intellectual faculties ; and in his refutation of the objections urged against Phrenology, he evidently felt himself on strong ground. The concluding lecture must have come home to the heart of every one present. Who does not recognize that the time is at hand when we are to rescue our children from the evils of a partial and often misdirected education ? What parent does not feel grateful to the philosopher who points the way to better things ; who shows him that the present painful system of confining all minds, however various, to one sole pursuit, has no foundation either in reason or nature ; who tells him that *all* the faculties which he sees budding in his child require his fostering hand, and that, if duly nurtured, *all* will reach that standard of excellence which the Creator has fixed as their limit ? Who can look with an indifferent eye on the man who tells us, even with plausibility only, that society can be most materially amended, not by additional severity, not by the scaffold and the guillotine, but solely by following those laws which God has wisely impressed on man’s nature, and beneficently put in his power to discover for our guidance. Surely such a man deserves the thanks and the blessings of his fellow-men. Surely the science which he advocates demands a serious and impartial examination. If false, it is at worst but the dream of benevolence ; if true, it is the most blessed vision that human intelligence has ever opened to the world.

“ The great applause which Mr Combe received at the close of his labours, considering the intellectual rank of those from whom it came, could not but be grateful to his feelings.*

“ We understand that the casts used as illustrations by Mr Combe have been purchased by subscription, and are to remain in town, which will give those interested in the study an opportunity of keeping up or improving their knowledge.

* The audience was composed of medical practitioners of the first eminence, lawyers of rank and intelligence, fellows of Trinity College, ministers of religion, and other individuals capable, by their talents and attainments, of forming a sound judgment on any subject submitted to their consideration.

“ Should the consequence be the formation of a Phrenological
“ Society, we must say that for our parts we heartily wish it
“ success. Such points of union are wanted in Dublin, and we
“ think the acuteness of observation so well known to be inhe-
“ rent in the Irish character, offers the most favourable augury
“ of phrenological success. Should Mr Combe’s professional
“ pursuits admit of his visiting this country at any future pe-
“ riod, we venture to predict that he will find he has not be-
“ stowed his labours on an ungrateful soil.”

Weigh this testimony with your own, and I leave to your own mind to decide which is entitled to the highest consideration. In one science you are eminently skilled,—viz. in that of music,—and I would ask whether you are not in the habit of treating lightly the criticisms of persons who obviously “ have never studied it deeply ?” Why then should all rational rules of judgment be reversed in the case of Phrenology, and the opinions of the wholly ignorant, the half-informed, and of every petulant pretender to scientific accuracy who opposes it, be regarded as oracular decisions on its merits ? Why should the eyes of the conductors of the press be shut against the testimony of nature, and their ears closed against the voice of individuals who have dedicated their talents to the study and elucidation of this subject ? Only one answer can be returned to this question. This is the doing of prejudice, and not the result of reason ; and were it not for such misrepresentations as those daily committed by a prejudiced press, the public would be in favour of, instead of being against, the advocates of Phrenology.

But it is now time to enter upon the more specific business of this communication. In a note to p. 13 it is said, that “ the Editor of the Weekly Journal appears fairly to have “ given up his hostility.” This remark was printed on 19th May, and was founded on your silence for several years on the doctrines in question. Your paper of Wednesday, 20th May, however, contained two columns and a half in praise of Mr Stone’s pamphlet and in depreciation of Phrenology, and I now apologize for having supposed that you had become neutral ; I must acknowledge you again as an opponent,

and wish you all the honour and success which ought to reward talent engaged in such a cause.

It is the fashion in what you call the circle “of great weight in science and philosophy” to scoff at Phrenology, and talk slightly of its pretensions; but men’s *actions* will sometimes betray the real condition of their minds when they strive most by their words to conceal them. The extreme readiness with which the editors of the Edinburgh newspaper press, with few exceptions, have fallen into the snare laid for them, although not designedly, by Mr Stone,—the large space which they have afforded in their crowded columns, at a busy season, for his lucubrations,—their systematic exclusion of every thing calculated to place before the public mind either the facts or the arguments which are constantly appearing in *favour* of Phrenology, lift the veil, and prove to demonstration that their indifference is affected. By this conduct they indicate a consciousness, that if Phrenology be a great and valuable discovery, they have acted an unworthy part towards it, and have taken their place among those opponents of truth, against whom the voice of posterity is uniformly directed with the heaviest denunciations. Disguise the matter as they will, this feeling is at the bottom of their proceedings. If Phrenology be the exposition of the true functions of the brain, and of the real philosophy of mind, it obviously carries consequences of the greatest magnitude in its train. It will not remove the mystery which hangs over the connexion betwixt mind and matter,—betwixt that which thinks and that which does not think; but it has opened up new and most important views of *the manner* in which the corporeal and mental constitutions of man influence, or act and re-act, on each other; and Dr Gall’s name will, in consequence, stand second to none that has hitherto graced the annals of scientific discovery. This is the position which the advocates of Phrenology claim for Dr Gall, who is now consigned to the grave. For themselves, they aspire only to the humble merit of appreciating a great

truth, and defending it against the prejudices of the ignorant, the learning of the wise, the ridicule of the flippant, and the gross misrepresentations of the envious and dishonest. Let the supporters and opponents of Phrenology, therefore, assume their appropriate places. If Dr Gall has *not* discovered the functions of the brain, and founded true mental philosophy, let *his* name, and the names of all his followers, be held up as the scorn and by-words of the present and future generations, until mankind, become weary with contemplating their folly, shall consign them to oblivion, as the most forcible expression of their contempt. But, on the other hand, if he has made such a contribution to human knowledge as entitles him to be ranked as the equal of Galileo, Harvey, and Newton, the other alternative is equally inevitable; his present detractors and opponents will be compelled to take their station along with those individuals who obstructed the discoveries, denied the merits, and embittered the lives of these illustrious men, whom posterity delights to honour. It is the secret conviction that there is substantial truth in this representation of the state of parties, and that the opponents who have any name to lose have not satisfied their own judgments that Phrenology is as unfounded as they affirm it to be, which gives a deep and abiding interest to the controversy, and must form my apology for addressing you on the present occasion.

You say that before Phrenologists “ can obtain general
“ belief, they must either lay the proofs of their doctrines be-
“ fore the public in such a plain and familiar shape as to com-
“ mand the assent of the great body of mankind; or, if their
“ doctrines are too abstract and profound for ordinary compre-
“ hension, they must render them satisfactory to so large a
“ portion of the scientific and philosophical world, as to induce
“ ordinary persons to credit them on the authority of their su-
“ periors in wisdom. If, therefore, we saw the doctrines of
“ Phrenology adopted and promulgated by those who deserve
“ to be considered the lights of the age, we should have little
“ or no hesitation in taking those doctrines for granted, in so
“ far as they were founded on investigations beyond our own
“ capacity. But, unluckily, this is not the case. No name of

“ great weight in science or philosophy is to be found among
“ the phrenological ranks.”

In answer to the remark, that “ no name of great weight
“ in science and philosophy is to be found among the phre-
“ nological ranks,” I observe, that this objection has very
frequently been urged, and as often been answered; but
prejudice will neither listen to reason nor profit by the les-
sons of history. The evidence that this *has been* done shall
be laid before you at length, that no reader of this Letter may
be driven to the necessity of either purchasing the works re-
ferred to, or going in search of them to a circulating library.
In the “ Elements of Phrenology,” 3d edition, p. 201, under
the head of “ Objections to Phrenology Considered,” the
following passages occur :—

“ *Objection.*—The world has gone on well enough with the
“ philosophy of mind it already possesses, which, besides, is
“ consecrated by great and venerable names, while Phrenology
“ has neither symmetry of structure, beauty of arrangement,
“ nor the suffrages of the learned to recommend it. Its vota-
“ ries are all third-rate men—persons without scientific or
“ philosophical reputations. They are not entitled, there-
“ fore, to challenge the regard of those who have higher studies
“ to occupy their attention. They complain that only ridicule
“ and abuse are directed against them, and that no one ven-
“ tures to challenge their principles or refute their facts; but
“ they do not yet stand high enough in public esteem to give
“ them a right to expect any other treatment.

“ *Answer.*—Phrenology being a new science, it follows that
“ men who possess reputation in physiology or mental philoso-
“ phy would appear to lose rather than gain renown, were they
“ to confess their present ignorance of the functions of the
“ brain and the philosophy of mind, which is a necessary pre-
“ lude to their adoption of Phrenology; and the subject does
“ not lie directly in the department of other scientific men.
“ In this manner it happens, oddly enough, that those who are
“ most directly called upon by their situation to examine the
“ science, are precisely those to whom its triumph would prove
“ most humiliating. Locke humorously observes on a similar
“ occasion, ‘ Would it not be an insufferable thing for a learned
“ ‘ professor, and that which his scarlet would blush at, to have
“ ‘ his authority of forty years’ standing wrought out of hard
“ ‘ rock, Greek and Latin, with no small expense of time and
“ ‘ candle, and confirmed by general tradition and a reverend
“ ‘ beard, in an instant overturned by an upstart novelist? Can
“ ‘ any one expect that he should be made to confess, that

“ ‘ what he taught his scholars thirty years ago was all error
 “ ‘ and mistake, and that he sold them hard words at a very
 “ ‘ dear rate? What probabilities, I say, are sufficient to pre-
 “ ‘ vail in such a case? And who ever, by the most cogent
 “ ‘ arguments, will be prevailed with to disrobe himself at
 “ ‘ once of all his old opinions and pretences to knowledge
 “ ‘ and learning, which with hard study he hath all his time
 “ ‘ been labouring for, and turn himself out stark-naked in
 “ ‘ quest of fresh notions? All the arguments that can be
 “ ‘ used will be as little able to prevail as the wind did with
 “ ‘ the traveller to part with his cloak, which he held only the
 “ ‘ faster.’* Human nature is the same now as in the days of
 “ Locke.

“ There is, however, another answer to the present objec-
 “ tion. Some individuals are born princes, dukes, or even
 “ field-m Marshals; but I am not aware that it has yet been an-
 “ nounced that any lady was delivered of a child of genius, or
 “ an infant of established reputation. These titles must be
 “ gained by the display of qualities which merit them; but if
 “ an individual quit the beaten track pursued by the philoso-
 “ phers of the day, and introduce any discovery, although
 “ equally stupendous and new, his reputation is necessarily in-
 “ volved in its merits? Harvey was not a great man *before* he
 “ discovered the circulation of the blood, but became such in
 “ consequence of having done so. What was Shakspeare be-
 “ fore the magnificence of his genius was justly appreciated?
 “ The author of *Kenilworth* represents him attending as an
 “ humble and comparatively obscure suitor at the court of Queen
 “ Elizabeth, and receiving a mark of favour in an ‘ Ah! Will
 “ Shakspeare, are you there?’ And he most appropriately re-
 “ marks, that here the immortal paid homage to the mortal.
 “ Who would now exchange the greatness of Shakspeare for
 “ the splendour of the proudest lord that bowed before the
 “ Maiden Queen? Or let us imagine Galileo, such as he was
 “ in reality, a feeble old man, humble in rank, destitute of po-
 “ litical influence, unprotected by the countenance or alliance
 “ of the great, poor, in short, in every thing except the splen-
 “ did gifts of a profound, original, and comprehensive genius,
 “ —and conceive him placed at the bar of the Roman pontiff
 “ and the seven cardinals, men terrible in power, invested with
 “ authority to torture and kill in this world, and, as was then
 “ believed, to damn through eternity; men magnificent in
 “ state, and arrogant in the imaginary possession of all the
 “ wisdom of their age—and let us say who was *then* great in
 “ reputation—Galileo or his judges? But who is *now* the idol
 “ of posterity—the old man or his persecutors? The case will

* Book iv. c. 20, sect. 11.

“ be the same with Gall. If his discoveries of the functions of
 “ the brain, and of the philosophy of the mind, stand the test
 “ of examination, and prove to be a correct interpretation of
 “ nature, they will surpass, in substantial importance to man-
 “ kind, the discoveries even of Harvey, Newton, and Galileo ;
 “ and this age will in consequence be rendered more illustrious
 “ by the introduction of Phrenology, than by the butcheries of
 “ Buonaparte, or the victories of Wellington. Finally, the as-
 “ sertion, that no men of note have embraced Phrenology, is not
 “ supported by fact. In the New Monthly Magazine for Ja-
 “ nuary 1823, it is said, ‘ There are many men here (Paris)
 “ ‘ amongst the most eminent for their medical and physiologi-
 “ ‘ cal knowledge, who, though differing widely upon other
 “ ‘ scientific topics, yet agree in saying, that there is much not
 “ ‘ only of probability, *but of truth*, in the system of Dr Gall.’ ”

Now, permit me to repeat here, that, previously to indulging in declamation on this or any similar topic, on which objections had been stated, and fully replied to, it was obviously your duty, in fairness, to say in what respects you considered the refutation imperfect. The Phrenologists have not evaded but met the objections of their opponents ; and it is a dereliction of all equitable principle to conceal the answers, and urge the objections as if they were original and unrefuted. You are too candid to do this knowingly ; and I urge the fact of your having treated the Phrenologists thus unhandsomely only as a proof that you have not studied their writings.

Your next observation is the following :—“ We believe
 “ that Phrenology is nowhere on so respectable a footing as
 “ in our own city.”

This observation may be well-founded ; but I suspect that you are as little acquainted with the progress of Phrenology as with its principles and evidence. The first medical journal of Britain, and, I may say of Europe, viz. the Medico-Chirurgical Review, has long supported Phrenology ; the London Medical and Surgical Journal is decidedly phrenological ; the leading medical journal of the United States, published in Philadelphia, has long advocated the same cause ; a Phrenological Journal of several years’ standing is regularly published in Copen-

hagen; very recently a prospectus reached this country for reprinting in America the Phrenological Journal of Edinburgh; the 19th Number of this work contained a long and interesting article communicated by the Phrenological Society of Washington, accompanied by a donation of casts. Dr Spurzheim lectured in Manchester in May, 1829, and his class was numerous and respectable, usually 200 auditors, and sometimes above. They wished him to lecture again in Manchester in October, and collected subscribers to that effect. The medical men particularly seemed anxious to take up Phrenology. In Paris a beautiful medal has been struck on the occasion of the death of Dr Gall. The obverse contains the head of Dr Gall, admirably executed, with his name; the reverse bears the inscription, “Au Créateur
“ de la Physiologie du Cerveau,” and round the margin the places and dates of his nativity and death.

The following extract from the Morning Herald proves that even in Italy an established professor has sacrificed his chair to his faith in this science:—

“ *Florence, Oct. 18, 1828.*

“ The discussions which occupy all parties here will, I dare
“ say, reach England. The dismissal of the Professor of Ana-
“ tomy at the Medical College is a sad evidence of the into-
“ lerant, persecuting spirit which still rules among the upper
“ powers, and that in the most liberal part of Italy. Not that
“ you in England have any right to wonder, for the world does
“ not forget the storm and the clatter, and the fierceness and the
“ bigotry, which pursued Mr Lawrence some time ago, when
“ somebody or other chose to deduce materialism from his
“ lectures. The accusation against Professor Uccelli is, that he
“ preached the doctrines of Gall and Spurzheim—in other
“ words, heresy, necessity, materialism, Protestantism, atheism,
“ and the devil,—so, when the howl of ignorance and barbarism
“ begins, it is easy enough to find victims. The first point is
“ for those knaves who set on the howlers to cover themselves
“ with the proper mask, and to swear they are influenced by
“ nothing less than a love of virtue and of religion. Uccelli
“ published, in 1826, five volumes on the Organization of the
“ Human Frame. His reputation as a physiologist stands se-
“ cond only to that of Vacca of Pisa. The fourth volume treats
“ of the anatomy of the brain, and may be deemed a defence of

“ the new theory. The discussion is carried on throughout in
“ a mild, modest, philosophical spirit; and, whatever may be
“ thought of his system, nothing can be urged against his man-
“ ner of treating it. I am no convert to the doctrine of the
“ twenty-seven departments, or boxes of organs, each separate
“ and distinct; but I honour the man who carries on the duty
“ of investigation in a frank and fearless temper, and am sure
“ mankind will be greatly served by the result, be it what it
“ may. If there be any part of the field of science in which
“ the whole of the human race are deeply and directly interest-
“ ed, it is in this—that a correct knowledge be obtained of the
“ structure and functions of every part of the human frame.
“ Uccelli is a dexterous controversialist, and was yet more re-
“ doubtable as he offered to meet his opponents even on what
“ they deemed their 'vantage-ground, and reconcile Gall with
“ St Augustine—the teachings of anatomy with the Pope's
“ Bulls—and experimental physiology with the faith of the Ca-
“ tholic Church. The priests, however, liked no such ally—
“ they cannot be better off by discussion—they may be worse
“ off; and he who is in a rotten ship would be a fool if he
“ brewed up a storm. But, in the meanwhile, a pamphlet, of
“ furious invective against the Professor, is published anony-
“ mously, but was undoubtedly traced to the Medical Sub-
“ Professor in the same College—one Lippi, who owed his si-
“ tuation and advancement to Uccelli, and availed himself of
“ his intimacy, first to seduce Uccelli's wife, and then to tra-
“ duce his character. What does Uccelli do but cite Lippi be-
“ fore the tribunals for defamation? and the court decides that
“ he shall be *temporarily* suspended. Uccelli, indignant at such
“ a result, proffered his resignation to the Grand Duke, alleg-
“ ing that he could not possibly continue to be the colleague of
“ his slanderer and betrayer. But the Grand Duke did not
“ care to trouble himself about the matter, and would not ac-
“ cept Uccelli's resignation, and thus the affair seemed to rest:
“ but now appears another pamphlet, written by a meddling
“ Professor of Lucca, (Grimaldi), defending Lippi, and holding
“ up the opinions of Uccelli to the execration of all devout
“ Catholics. The pamphlet reached the Palazzo Pitti, and dire
“ indeed was the shock and the horror produced in the minds
“ of the three Grand Duchesses, who had no notion that such
“ damnable and devilish notions as those of Uccelli had any
“ existence in their States. These ladies—pinks of piety, and
“ peonies of faith—who scarcely ever take a ride without cram-
“ ming their carriages with wax-candles to present to some Ma-
“ donna whom they visit in their way—these fair and gentle
“ ladies hurry, with uplifted hands, long faces, and noisy
“ tongues, to the Grand Duke, and move him at last to refer Uc-
“ celli's work to the theological college of Pisa. The college
“ condemned it, as a thing of course, and Uccelli is sent a-
“ begging.

“ Two of the Bologna Professors have given similar umbrage
 “ by preaching *fatalism*: any word will do for a persecutor,
 “ particularly if nobody understands its meaning. Their names
 “ are Oricoli and Tommasini. Cardinal Opizoni sent to them
 “ the following polite message:—‘ I beg to apologize for the
 “ ‘ trouble I give ; but, as all mankind are not so enlightened as
 “ ‘ you, you will be so good as not to scandalize them by preach-
 “ ‘ ing the dangerous and immoral doctrines of Dr Gall:’ and
 “ the Professors, not less courteous, replied, that they were ob-
 “ liged by the polite interference, with which they should com-
 “ ply ; but they have not complied, and a proceeding is ripen-
 “ ing for deposing them. It is known that both Lippi and
 “ Grimaldi, who have been fanning this flame of persecution,
 “ have not the wretched excuse of the ignorant and fanatic—
 “ they know better ; but in Italy it is difficult for public opi-
 “ nion to apply its scourges for the punishment of the vile, or
 “ to stretch out the encouraging hand for the protection of the
 “ injured.”

Your next objection is, “ When it is considered how many
 “ years Phrenology has been taught, this total failure in obtain-
 “ ing proselytes of note forms a presumption by no means fa-
 “ vourable to the soundness of its doctrine.” This remark also
 has been anticipated and answered in the *Elements of Phre-
 nology* :—

Objection.—“ ‘ It is inconceivable, that, after the discovery
 “ ‘ was made, there should be *any body* who could pretend to
 “ ‘ doubt of its reality. The means of verifying it, one would
 “ ‘ think, must have been such as not to leave a pretext for the
 “ ‘ slightest hesitation ; and the fact that, after twenty years’
 “ ‘ preaching in its favour, it is far more generally rejected than
 “ ‘ believed, might seem to afford pretty conclusive evidence
 “ ‘ against the possibility of its truth.’ ”

Answer.—“ Mr Playfair, in his ‘ *Dissertation*,’ prefixed to
 “ the *Supplement of the Encyclopædia Britannica*, observes,—
 “ ‘ It must not be supposed that so great a revolution in science
 “ ‘ as that which was made by the new analysis, (by Newton,)
 “ ‘ could be brought about entirely without opposition, as in
 “ ‘ every society there are some who think themselves interested
 “ ‘ to maintain things in the condition wherein they have found
 “ ‘ them. The considerations are indeed sufficiently obvious,
 “ ‘ which, in the moral and political world, tend to produce this
 “ ‘ effect, and to give a stability to human institutions often so
 “ ‘ little proportionate to their real value, or to their general
 “ ‘ utility. Even in matters purely intellectual, and in which
 “ ‘ the abstract truths of arithmetic and geometry seem alone
 “ ‘ concerned, the prejudices, the selfishness, or the vanity of
 “ ‘ those who pursue them, not unfrequently combine to resist
 “ ‘ improvement, and often engage no inconsiderable degree of

“ ‘talent in drawing back, instead of pushing forward, the machine of science. The introduction of methods entirely new must often change the relative place of the men engaged in scientific pursuits, and must oblige many, after descending from the stations they formerly occupied, to take a lower position in the scale of intellectual improvement. The enmity of such men, if they be not animated by a spirit of real candour and the love of truth, is likely to be directed against methods by which their vanity is mortified and their importance lessened.’ ”—*Dissertation*, part II. p. 27.

“ Mr Playfair, again, speaking of the discoveries of Newton in regard to the composition of light, says, ‘ But all were not equally candid with the Dutch philosopher (Huygens); and though the discovery now communicated had every thing to recommend it which can arise from what is great, new, and singular; though it was not a theory or system of opinions, but the generalization of facts made known by experiments; and though it was brought forward in a most simple and unpretending form,—a host of enemies appeared, each eager to obtain the unfortunate pre-eminence of being the first to attack conclusions which the unanimous voice of posterity was to confirm.’ ”—P. 56. “ ‘ Among them, one of the first was Father Pardies, who wrote against the experiments, and what he was pleased to call the *hypothesis* of Newton. A satisfactory and calm reply convinced him of his mistake, which he had the candour very readily to acknowledge. A countryman of his, Mariotte, was more difficult to be reconciled, and though very conversant with experiment, appears never to have succeeded in repeating the experiments of Newton.’ ”—*Ib.* p. 57.

“ These observations are completely applicable to the case of Phrenology. The discovery is new, important, and widely at variance with the prevailing opinions of the present generation; and its reception and progress have been precisely such as any sensible person, acquainted with the history of science, would have anticipated. ‘ The discoverer of the circulation of the blood,’ says the *Edinburgh Review*,—‘ a discovery which, if measured by its consequences on physiology and medicine, was the greatest ever made since physic was cultivated, suffers no diminution of his reputation in our day, from the incredulity with which his doctrine was received by some, the effrontery with which it was claimed by others, or the knavery with which it was attributed to former physiologists, by those who could not deny and would not praise it. The very names of these envious and dishonest enemies of Harvey are scarcely remembered; and the honour of this great discovery now rests, beyond all dispute, with the great philosopher who made it.’ Posterity will pass a similar judgment on Dr Gall and his opponents.”

Now, if human nature has not changed since the days of Galileo, Harvey, Newton, and Locke, the opposition of men of great weight in science and philosophy is precisely what was to have been expected, provided Phrenology be really a great and important discovery. I should be happy to be informed of a solitary example of an opposite kind,—one in which a man who had poured a stream of light upon a dark and perplexed department of philosophy, who had thereby brought strikingly into view not only the magnificence of the Creator's institutions, but the poverty and meanness of the fictions which the human imagination had previously substituted in their place,—was recognised as a benefactor of his race, and honoured as a superior genius by the “great men” whose feeble errors had thus been placed in painful contrast with the simple yet irresistible and beautiful truths of nature. Farther, are you able to point out any physiology of the brain better than Dr Gall's? or any sufficient reason hitherto assigned by the great in philosophy and science for rejecting it as unfounded?—any refutation of it, in short, which is recognised, not by Phrenologists, but by the public, as subversive of its pretensions? If you cannot indicate such a work, (and the readiness with which you abandon all prior refutations, and the avidity with which you cling to Mr Stone, show that you cannot,) I am well authorised in ascribing the hostility of men of established reputation to prejudice alone.

Because Phrenology has been ridiculed and rejected by men of note, I do not argue that it must necessarily be true; all I contend for is, that, on the known principles of human nature, its truth would not be sufficient to protect it from similar abuse, and therefore that its hostile reception affords no ground for inferring its falsehood.

You charge presumption against the Phrenologists for pretending “to destroy the labours of the whole metaphysical world from Aristotle down to Dugald Stewart;” and one would naturally infer from this, that these labours had been recognised as something substantial, and constituting esta-

blished and useful science. I am enabled, however, to give you a melancholy proof under the hand of Mr Stewart himself, that, even before he had completed the publication of his doctrines, the subversion of his whole fabric by his successor in the University of Edinburgh had been proclaimed to the world, and threatened to disturb the repose of his closing years. The following letter, addressed by Mr Stewart to Dr Poole, in answer to one accompanying a review of Dr Thomas Brown's *Physiology of the Mind*, has been printed by Dr Poole for a different purpose, and sent into pretty extensive circulation. On this account, and as Mr Stewart is now dead, I trust there is no impropriety in introducing it here :—

“ *Kinneil House, 15th June, 1820.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I beg you to accept of my best thanks for your
 “ kind attention in sending me the last number of your Review.
 “ From the favourable account you give of *one* of the articles
 “ contained in it I have no doubt of its merits ; and, had it re-
 “ lated to any other subject, I should have had much pleasure
 “ in complying with your request. But, not having yet looked
 “ into the work which has given occasion to this article, I was
 “ not in a condition to profit by the strictures of your friend ;
 “ and I have, therefore, been forced to delay the perusal of them,
 “ till I shall have more leisure than I have at present any pros-
 “ pect of soon enjoying. I am now far advanced in years, and
 “ have but a short time left for completing those tasks for which
 “ some of your critical brethren are pleased to represent me as
 “ *pledged* to the public. May I add to this, (in confidence to
 “ yourself,) that, not having taken up very lightly my philoso-
 “ phical opinions, I cannot afford to waste my time in the study
 “ of new theories, which profess to accomplish a complete revo-
 “ lution in that branch of science to which I have devoted the
 “ best part of my life ? I must, therefore, during my few re-
 “ maining years, content myself with plodding on in the beaten
 “ track, and with treading, as far as I can, in the footsteps of
 “ those humbler guides whom it has hitherto been my ambition
 “ to follow. Another consideration also weighs with me not a
 “ little. The affection which I have always felt for Dr Brown's
 “ amiable qualities, and the well-known exertions which I made
 “ to introduce him into the University, impose on me, now that
 “ he is unfortunately no more, a complete silence with respect
 “ to his speculations ; and I must, therefore, where there is any
 “ difference between us in our views, trust to the operation of
 “ time in establishing the truth. “ DUGALD STEWART.”

Such a letter as this could not have been written by Galileo or Newton on the appearance of a work by any pupil of theirs. Its general tone expresses a feeling of insecurity which these philosophers could never have experienced regarding the stability of their discoveries.

To myself you are kind enough to pay a compliment in the following words:—"Mr Combe, in particular—who seems to be decidedly the next in rank to Spurzheim himself —has displayed powers of so high an order, that we have often been tempted to wish they were exercised upon some object of less equivocal value. But still Mr Combe is merely a Phrenologist—in which capacity alone he has any *status* in the literary world."

Few words will suffice in answer to these observations. You greatly over-rate the extent of my ability; for my strength lies in the goodness of my cause. I have *studied Phrenology*, and read its doctrines directly in the page of nature. What I assert in point of fact, I have seen and handled; and what I maintain in argument, I have found confirmed by practical results. Those who have attacked the doctrines, on the other hand, have not studied them as science; they have not read the facts, on which they found their objections, in the book of nature; and they have not tried how their arguments would harmonize with other ascertained truths, nor how they would issue if carried into practical effect. Full of confidence in themselves, and of contempt for their adversary, each has come to the combat without arms and without armour; and if in some instances the assailant has reeled back from the shock of the encounter, his own weakness was the cause, and not any gigantic strength in him whom he assailed.

I plead guilty of being known to the world only as a Phrenologist. Believing, as I do, that the same Divine Wisdom which ordained the universe, presided also at the endowment of the brain with its functions; that the brain is the organ of the mind, and that mind is the noblest work of God; convinced, also, that this discovery carries in its train the most

valuable improvements in education, morals, and in civil and religious institutions,—I cannot conceive a nobler employment than that of vindicating its claims to consideration, and stemming, to the extent of my feeble ability, the mighty flood of prejudice and injustice with which, like all other important discoveries, it has been deluged. These sentiments are not the ebullitions of mere excited enthusiasm. You will find them stated in sober calmness in a duodecimo volume on the Constitution of Man. To be recognised, hereafter, by impartial and enlightened men, as having been in any degree instrumental in braving the storm of popular derision with which Phrenology was at first assailed, will more than satisfy all the ambition for posthumous fame which ever fired my bosom; and I never was so extravagant as to expect, while alive, any reward from “the great in science and philosophy” except ridicule and dislike. They have chosen their part, and I have chosen mine: the long day will do justice to all.

You proceed,—“Phrenology is founded upon certain propositions, in point of fact, which are averred by its teachers, and which it is incumbent on them to prove. These propositions are perfectly distinct and intelligible—they involve nothing impossible or self-contradictory; and the only question therefore is, are they supported by sufficient evidence? This question the Phrenologists are bound to answer, and they must answer it by bringing forward a complete and irresistible body of evidence. This, we think, they have hitherto been unable to do; and, therefore, we must continue to withhold our assent to their doctrines.”

Any person of ordinary impartiality would presume from these remarks, that you had really made yourself acquainted with the body of evidence which the Phrenologists had brought forward, and found it deficient; but I appeal to yourself whether any inference could be more erroneous. Five complete volumes of the Phrenological Journal, replete with facts, are now published, and I venture to say, that you have not read one of them, putting all your detached efforts in this way together. There are above four hundred skulls and casts in the Phrenological Museum, open

once a-week to your inspection ; and I have good reason to believe that you have never examined twenty of them, or probably one of them, with a view to ascertain whether Phrenology be true. The works of Dr Gall extend to eight 8vo volumes, and are to a very great extent records of observations ; and if you have perused fifty pages of them all, I shall be surprised to learn that your studies have been so extensive. Farther, Dr Spurzheim lectured here in winter 1828, and exhibited evidence in favour of Phrenology to the senses of his hearers ; but you did not attend him. The Phrenological Society has brought forward numerous and highly-interesting facts at its meetings, which have been held once a-fortnight during winter for nine years, to which admission is easily obtained ; but these meetings you did not attend. Finally, I used the freedom to present you with a ticket to my course of lectures commencing in January last ; but you did not honour me with your presence. As you, in these circumstances, have been led to resume your hostility to Phrenology, to excite anew the prejudices of the public against it, to defer, so far as your influence extends, the day when justice shall be done to the merits of Dr Gall and society shall reap the benefits of his discovery, I have considered it my duty to address you in their vindication. The consequences which attend your proceedings confer on them importance. An enlightened press is a powerful check on folly, presumption, and envy, which instinctively delight in the misrepresentation of truth, and the obstruction of its progress : A press, on the other hand, incapable, through ignorance, of discriminating between truth and error, and prone by its prejudices to believe every assertion on one side, and to turn a deaf ear to every testimony from the other, is a public calamity, when the subject of discussion is one of such direct and consequential importance as the physiology of the brain and the philosophy of the mind. It is not, therefore, your opinions as an individual which I arraign, but your conduct as the Editor of an influential journal ; and, in addressing

you even in this character, my object is to win you to impartiality in future, and not to resent injuries which you have unintentionally committed in the past. Towards yourself personally I have long entertained, and hope I shall ever cherish, the sincerest respect, and remain,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

GEO. COMBE.

Edinburgh, 30th May, 1829.

THE END.

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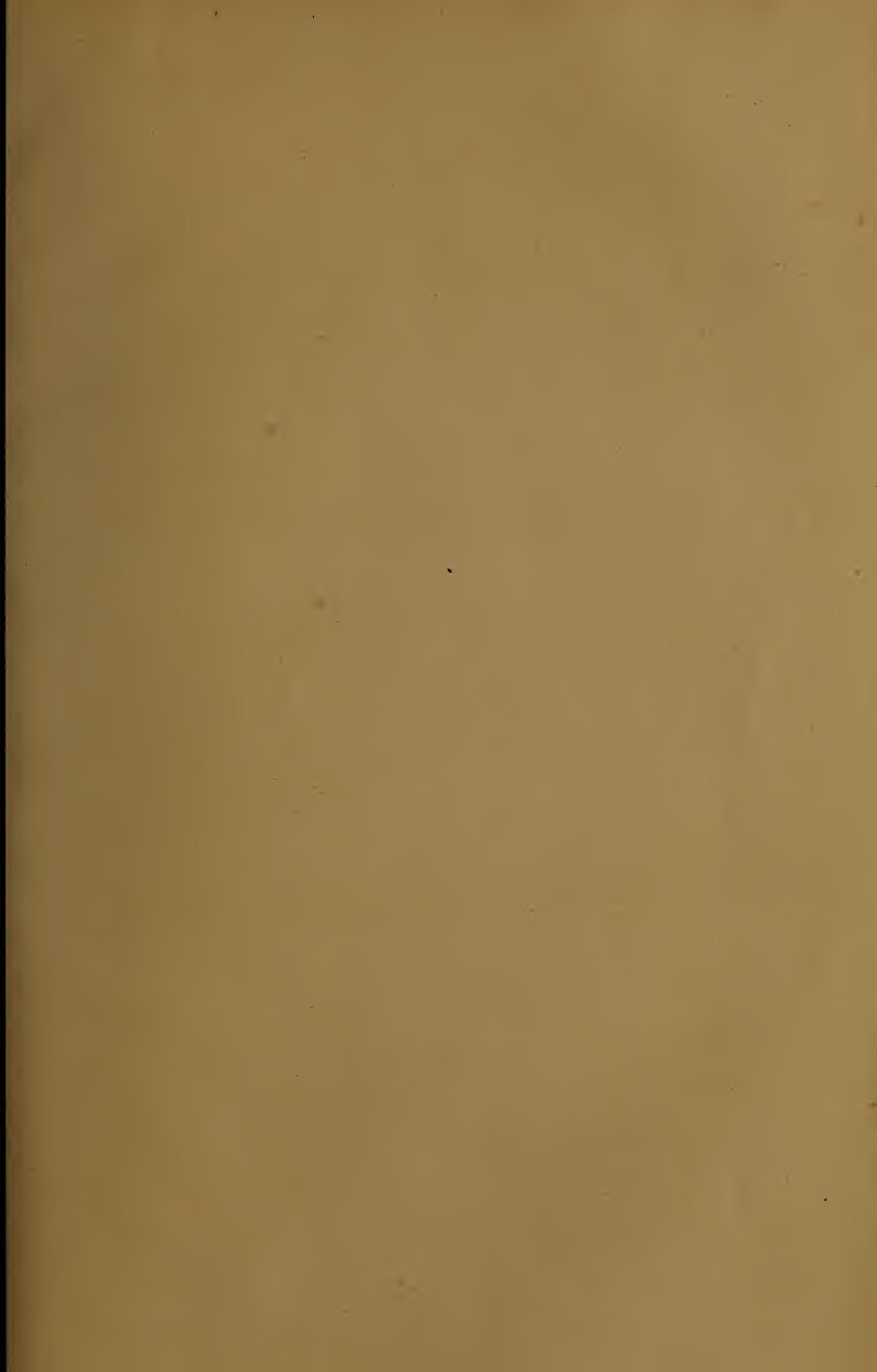
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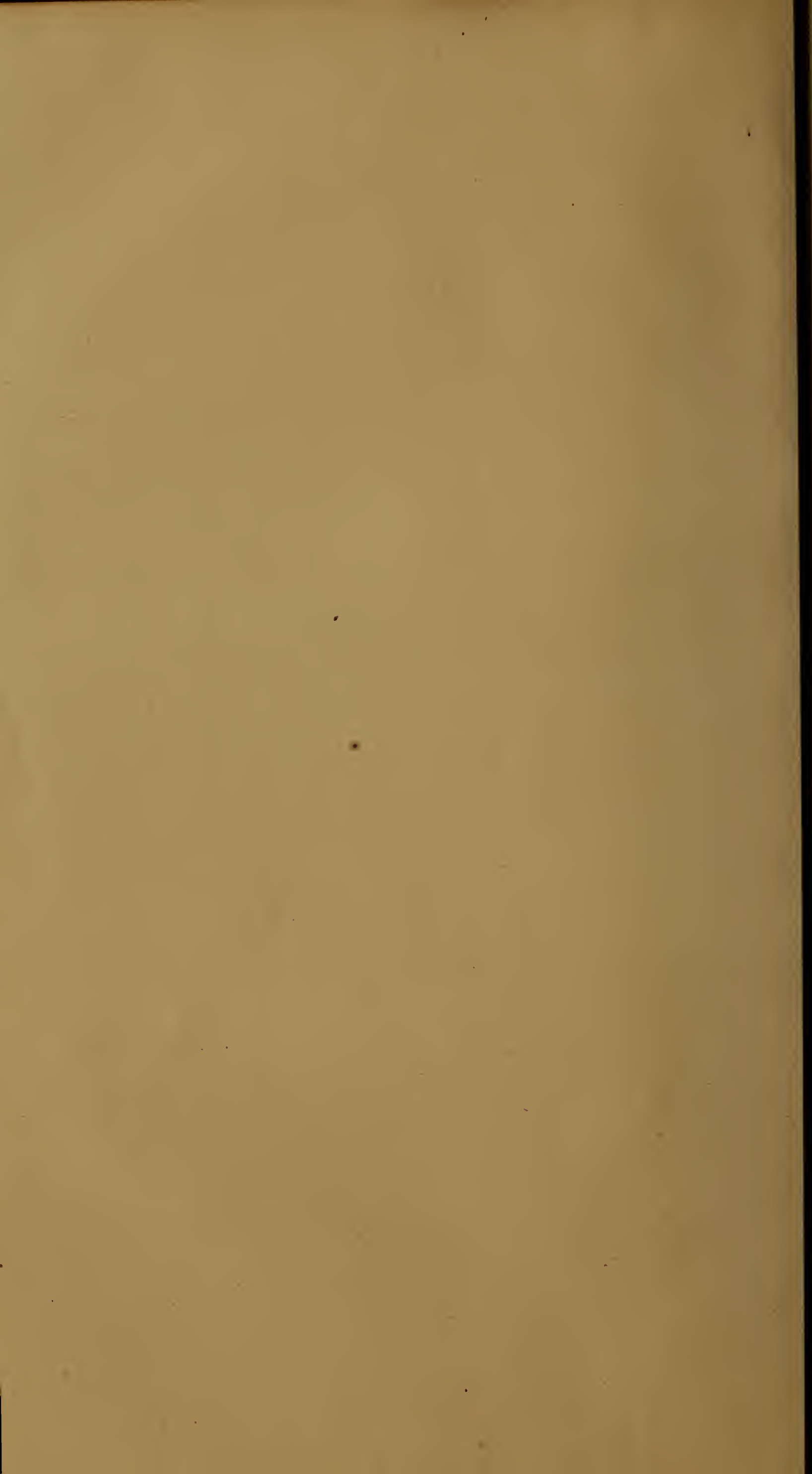
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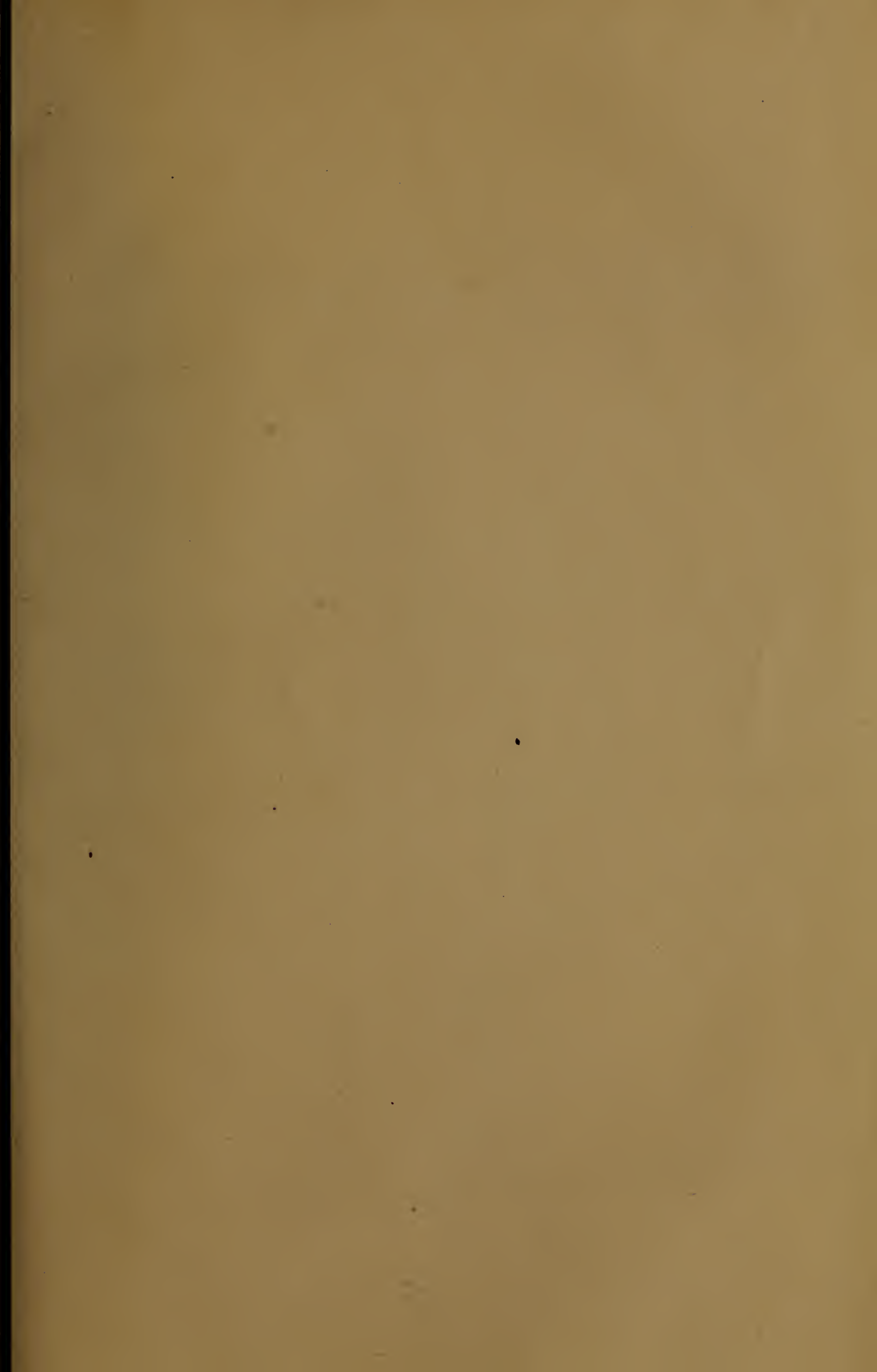
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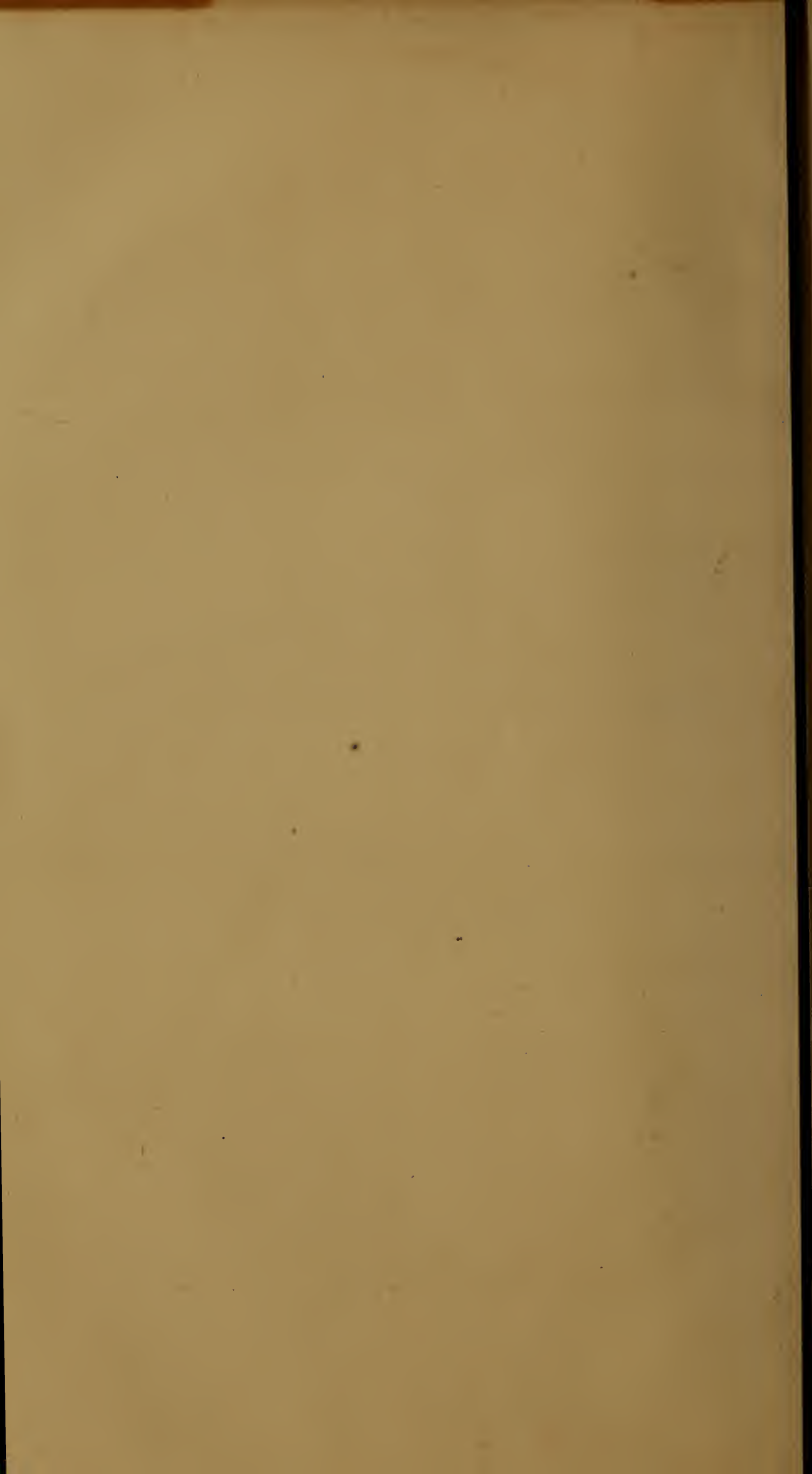
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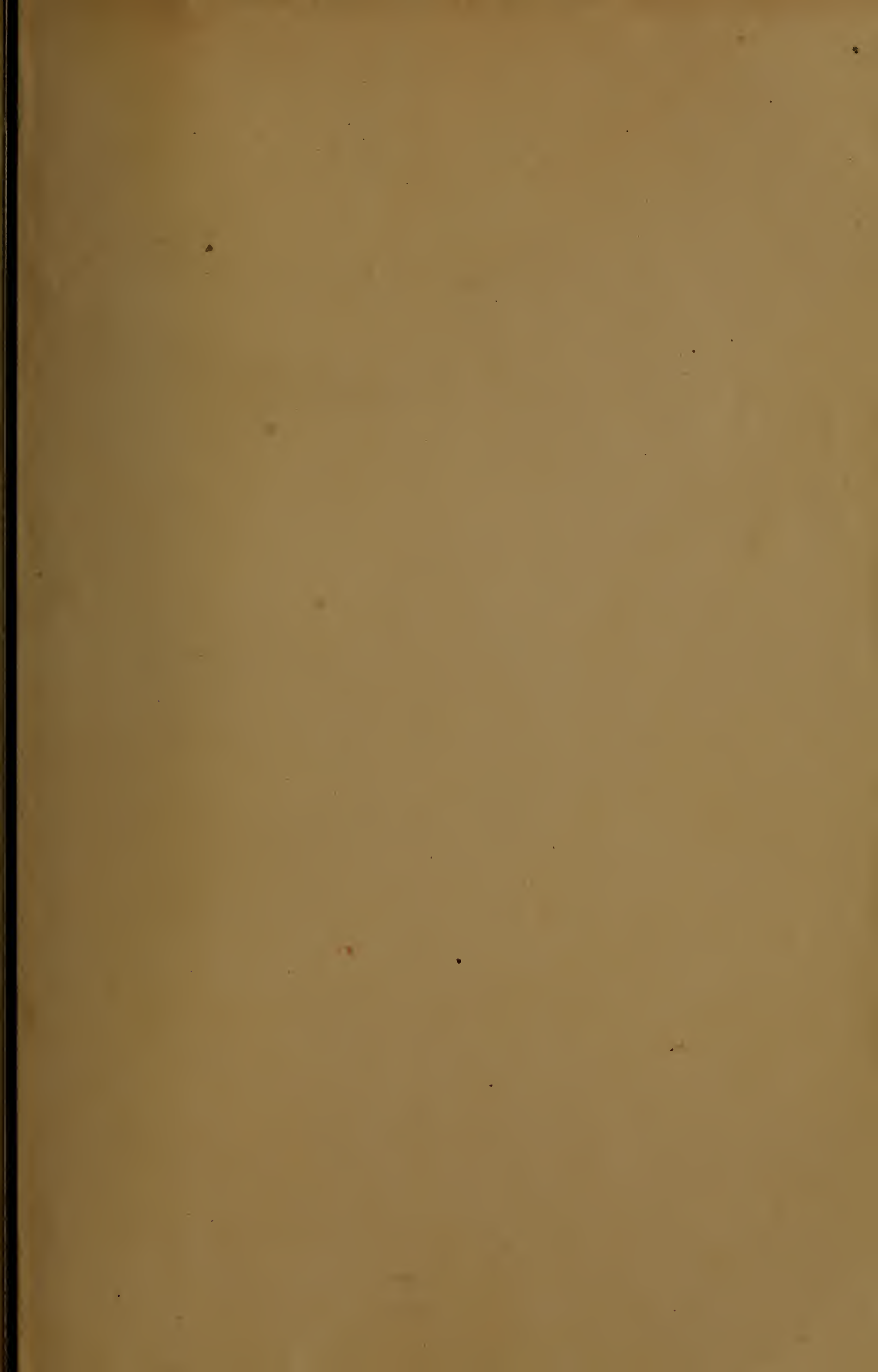
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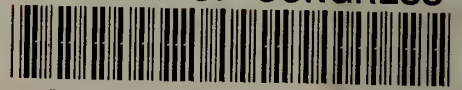








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